

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 10206

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EA PASS AMBASSADOR MARTIN

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TAGS: OGEN

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF SAAFO OPERATIONS

REF: A. SAIGON 9898

B. SAIGON 10190

1. REGRETTABLY THE DRAFT AUDIT REPORT WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF REF A REFLECTS MOST SERIOUS MISCONCEPTIONS AS TO HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE CURRENT PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE US GOVERNMENT EFFORT IN VIETNAM.

2. IN THE SPRING OF 1973 THE AMBASSADOR BEFORE TAKING UP HIS POST IN SAIGON WAS GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND CLEARLY AT THE TOP LEVELS OF THE US GOVERNMENT THAT OUR POLICY OBJECTIVE IN VIETNAM REQUIRED THAT THE ENTIRE RESOURCES OF THE US DIPLOMATIC MISSION BE FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON A MOST INTENSIVE AND SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT EFFORT. THIS EFFORT ENCOMPASSED ALL ELEMENTS OF THE US MISSION INCLUDING AID, THE DAO, THE FIELD STAFF AND OTHERS. THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR FIELD OPERATIONS IN THE AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE WAS MADE IN A WASAG MEETING AND APPROVED BY THE WHITE HOUSE. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO INSURE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE ENTIRE FIELD ESTABLISHMENT TO THE HIGHEST PRIORITY ATTACHED TO THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. ALL ELEMENTS OF THE US MISSION IN SAIGON WERE INFORMED AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE FIELD ESTABLISHMENT WAS AND REMAINS A RESOURCE AVAILABLE TO THEM.

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 10206 021122Z

3. CONTRARY TO THE ASSUMPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN THE DRAFT AUDIT REPORT THE US GOVERNMENT EFFORT IN THE RVN DOES NOT CONSIST OF SEPARATE AND DISPARATE AGENCIES OPERATING IN ISOLATION OF EACH OTHER, EACH IN ITS OWN NICHE WITH INTERESTS UNRELATED TO EACH OTHER, AND EACH JEALOUSLY GUARDING ITS PIECE OF THE ACTION. ON THE CONTRARY, THE US GOVERNMENT CONDUCTS ITS SUBSTANTIAL BUSINESS IN VIETNAM AS AN INTEGRATED DIPLOMATIC MISSION WITH THE RESOURCES AND SPECIALIZED SKILLS OF ALL ITS ELEMENTS FOCUSED ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF US PURPOSES OF WHICH, AS STATED ABOVE, DEVELOPMENT HAS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY.

4. TO MAKE SUCH A STRUCTURE EFFECTIVE PEOPLE ARE ASSIGNED AS NEEDED AND CALLED FOR BY THEIR SKILLS. OF COURSE, THE "SAAFO" FIELD PERSONNEL (AS ALL OTHER FIELD PERSONNEL IN VIETNAM) ARE ASSIGNED AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE CONSULATES GENERAL AND ALL US GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL IN SAIGON ARE A PART OF THE US DIPLOMATIC MISSION, AND THE ENTIRE EFFORT IS DIRECTED BY THE AMBASSADOR AS CHIEF OF MISSION. THAT AN AID PAID GENERALIST OFFICER IN THE FIELD SHOULD FIND IT PART OF HIS DUTY TO KEEP AN EYE ON SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IS DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO THE MISSION'S EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AND JUST AS APPROPRIATE AS A STATE PAID FSO DEVOTING PART OF HIS TIME TO GETTING A LOBSTER INDUSTRY STARTED OR SEEING AFTER IMPROVEMENT IN THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. A COMPARTMENTALIZED AND EACH STRICTLY TO HIS OWN STRUCTURE OF THE US GOVERNMENT EFFORT IN VIETNAM PARTICULARLY UNDER CURRENT DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE INEXCUSABLY WASTEFUL, DANGEROUS AND STUPID.

5. WE UNDERSTAND THE AUDIT WAS UNDERTAKEN AT THE DIRECTION OF AID WASHINGTON AND WOULD CONSIDER CONDUCTING SUCH AN AUDIT AS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE. I TRUST HOWEVER THAT IT WAS NOT CONDUCTED SIMPLY TO VALIDATE A PRE-DETERMINED CONCLUSION. IN ANY EVENT, THE DRAFT AUDIT REPORT DOES NOT REFLECT AWARENESS OF THE BACKGROUND OR OUR CURRENT PURPOSES IN VIETNAM. NOR, AS INDICATED IN REF B, DOES IT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE SENIOR USAID STAFF HERE.
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